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other. We should stop and reflect, before trying to analyze them all into the same elements. We should remember that in early times the solar myth was a sort of type after which all wonderful stories would be likely to be patterned, and that to such a type tradition also would be made to conform. These are considerations which Mr. Cox has not kept with sufficient constancy in his mind. If he had kept them in mind, his excellent little book would have been almost above criticism.

- 14.— *The Book of Were-Wolves: being an Account of a Terrible Superstition.* By SABINE BARING-GOULD, M. A. London: Smith, Elder, & Co. 1865. Crown 8vo. pp. 266.

WITHOUT entering upon the difficult question, whether it is ever too late to discharge one's duty to a good book by writing a notice of it, we would call attention to this little volume by Mr. Baring-Gould as one eminently worthy, from every point of view, of being reprinted in this country.

"The Book of Were-Wolves" is a good book in the sense in which all Mr. Baring-Gould's productions are "good": that is, it is entertaining, it is accurate as far as it goes, and it contains an account of things which are worth knowing, though they are in reality but little known and little written about. More than this we can hardly say of any of these books. They are not scholarly in the high sense of the word; they are neither thorough, systematic, nor always philosophical. In reading the "Curious Myths" one is shocked at the outset by the ridiculous surmise that the notion of the Wandering Jew may after all have a foundation in literal fact, because of Christ's prophecy that some who were then on earth should stay to see his second coming! Farther on in the same volume one's scholarly sense is outraged by the author's explicit approval of a clever, but silly, squib of a French abbé, in which Napoleon is identified with Apollo, and minutely delineated as a solar hero. The prelate of course intends to ridicule the great school of mythology of which his countryman Bréal is one of the founders. His brochure is similar in spirit to the "Historic Doubts" of the late Dr. Whately, and in point of ingenious puerility is about on a par with it. The perverse etymology which derives the name Napoleon from *naí* + *Apoleo* (a very Apollo!!) is worthy of Ménage; and that Mr. Baring-Gould could even be very deeply amused by it shows that he has never acquired a firm grasp of his subject. He boldly explains Thornrose and Melusina, nay, even Schamir, as physical myths; but when he comes to William Tell, he is dimly afraid of

"going too far," and so quotes his abbé by way of caution. This is characteristic, not of a scholar, but of a dilettante with scholarly tastes. And then as to philosophy, what shall we say to the grave suggestion, on page 259 of the present volume, that the case of M. Bertrand, the "human hyena," was one, not of ghoulish insanity, but of true diabolical possession? It is rather late for such hypotheses to find favor.

Although the subject of were-wolves is not treated very systematically, it is nevertheless possible to cull from the book a tolerably complete theory of the origin and growth of this frightful superstition. A were-wolf, or *loup-garou*, was a person who had the power of transforming himself into a wolf, being endowed, while in the lupine state, with the intelligence of a man, the ferocity of a wolf, and the irresistible strength of a demon. Antiquity believed in the existence of such persons; in the Middle Ages such a metamorphosis was supposed to be a phenomenon of daily occurrence; and even at the present day, in secluded portions of Europe, the peasants still cherish the superstition. The belief, moreover, is supported by a vast amount of evidence, which can neither be argued nor pooh-poohed into insignificance. The business of the comparative mythologist is to trace the pedigree of the ideas from which such a conception may have sprung. The business of the critical historian is to ascertain and classify the actual facts which this particular conception was used to interpret.

In the first place, Mr. Baring-Gould shows that we have a true were-wolf myth,—that in early Aryan physics the black storm-cloud, or *Rákshasas*, was explained as a great bristle-haired wolf, just as the lightning was explained as a darting serpent, and the fleecy clouds as gently gliding swan-maidens, *apsaras*, *Valkyries*, or *Houris*. The conception of the were-wolf had, therefore, the same kind of origin as the conception of the mermaid, *Melusina*, or *Undine*; and, in view of this, perhaps, we hardly need to call to our aid the doctrine of metempsychosis, except as an additional illustration of the community of nature which in antiquity was supposed to hold between men and brutes.

In the second place, we find that a were-wolf was commonly called a "skin-changer" (*versipellis*). The mediæval theory was, that, while the were-wolf kept his human form, his hair grew inwards; when he wished to become a wolf, he simply turned himself inside out. In many trials on record, the prisoners were closely interrogated as to how this inversion might be accomplished; but we are not aware that any one of them ever gave a satisfactory answer. At the moment of change their memories seem to have become temporarily befogged. An older theory was, that the possessed person had merely to put on a

wolf's skin, in order to assume instantly the lupine form and character. It is impossible to avoid seeing in this a reminiscence of the fact that the old Berserkers were in the habit of haunting the woods by night, clothed in the hides of wolves or bears.

Such being the genesis of the idea, we may next point out the facts which gave to it concrete reality, and made it one of the most horrible of superstitions. The first of these facts is the Berserker insanity characteristic of Scandinavia, but by no means unknown in other countries. In the times when killing one's enemies often formed a part of the necessary business of life, persons were frequently found who killed for the mere love of the thing,—with whom slaughter was an end desirable in itself, not merely a means to a desirable end. What the miser is in an age which worships Mammon, such was the Berserker in an age when the current idea of heaven was of a place where people could hack each other to pieces through all eternity, and when the man who refused a challenge was punished with confiscation of his estates. With these Northmen, in the ninth century, the chief business and amusement in life was to set sail for some pleasant country, like Spain or France, and make all the coasts and navigable rivers hideous with rapine and massacre. When at home, in the intervals between their freebooting expeditions, they were liable to become possessed by a strange homicidal madness, during which they would array themselves in wolf-skins and sally forth by night to snap the backbones, smash the skulls, and sometimes to drink, with fiendish glee, the blood of unwary travellers or loiterers. These fits of madness were usually followed by great exhaustion and nervous depression.

Such was the celebrated "Berserker rage," not peculiar to Norseland, although there most conspicuously manifested. Taking now a step in advance, we find that there have been many cases, in comparatively civilized countries, of monstrous homicidal insanity. The two most celebrated cases are those of the Maréchal de Retz, in 1440, and of Elizabeth, a Hungarian countess, in the seventeenth century. The Countess Elizabeth enticed young girls into her palace on divers pretexts, and then coolly murdered them, for the purpose of bathing in their blood. The spectacle of human suffering became at last such a delight to her that she would apply with her own hands the most excruciating tortures, relishing the shrieks of her victims as the epicure relishes each sip of his old *Château Margaux*. In this way she is said to have murdered six hundred and fifty persons before her evil career was brought to an end. But the case of the Maréchal de Retz is still more frightful. A marshal of France, a scholarly man, a patriot, and a man of holy life, he became suddenly possessed by an uncontrollable

desire to murder children. During seven years he continued to inveigle little boys and girls into his castle, at the rate of about two each week, and then put them to death in various ways, that he might witness their agony and bathe in their blood, — experiencing after each occasion the most dreadful remorse, but led on by an irresistible craving to repeat the crime. When this unparalleled iniquity was finally brought to light, the castle was found to contain bins full of children's bones. The horrible details of the trial are to be found in this "Book of Were-Wolves," and in the works of Michelet and Martin.

Going a step farther, we find cases in which the propensity to murder has been accompanied by cannibalism. On the 14th of December, 1598, a tailor of Châlons was sentenced by the Parliament of Paris to be burned alive for lycanthropy.

"This wretched man had decoyed children into his shop, or attacked them in the gloaming, when they strayed in the woods, had torn them with his teeth, and killed them, after which he seems calmly to have dressed their flesh as ordinary meat, and to have eaten it with great relish. The number of little innocents whom he destroyed is unknown. A whole cask full of bones was discovered in his house."—p. 81.

About 1850 a beggar in the village of Polomyia, in Galicia, was proved to have killed and eaten fourteen children. And there are many other instances.

Finally, there have been a great many cases in which the homicidal and cannibal craving has been accompanied by genuine hallucination, in which the miserable wretches have actually supposed themselves to be wolves or other wild animals. The details collected in Mr. Baring-Gould's book leave no doubt on this point; and here, at last, the lycanthropy is complete. With all these data at our command, the belief in were-wolves is quite adequately accounted for; and we see how curiously myth and reality have co-operated in originating and keeping alive the superstition.

Many persons would undoubtedly find this "Book of Were-Wolves" too horrible to read. But, horrible as it is, its value and interest as a study of some of the obscurer phenomena of human life are not to be denied; and we are, on the whole, too grateful to Mr. Baring-Gould for having treated the subject at all, to be very much disposed to complain of him for not having treated it more systematically.